

DECEMBER 8, 1999, MEETING - BUTTE, MONTANA

Members Absent: Doug Rand, Cedron Jones, Chuck Swysgood, and Steve Antonioli.

Members Present: Hank Goetz, Dean Welborn, Dan Lucas, Bruce Farling, Mel Montgomery, Ted Coffman, Doug Abelin, Bob Zimmerman, Greg Schildwachter, and Tad Dale.

Hank welcomed Dean Welborn to the RAC, and the other members introduced themselves.

Missoula Field Manager Nancy Anderson was the Designated Federal Official. Jean Nelson-Dean facilitated the meeting. Butte Field Manager Merle Good and Dillon Field Manager Scott Powers were present. Butte Outdoor Recreation Planner Darrell McDaniel attended part of the meeting to give a briefing on the Whitetail-Pipestone Travel Plan. Missoula Land Use Specialist George Hirschenberger was on hand to present information on landscape analysis. Vickie Satterlee took notes of the meeting.

Nancy Anderson

RAC member Martha Montgomery passed away in October. The nomination process for her Category 1 position has just begun and will end January 10, 2000. Tad Dale has been nominated to replace JayLynn Hanson, who resigned for personal reasons.

Cedron Jones called Martha's family on behalf of the RAC and flowers were sent. There was discussion about the possibility of the RAC presenting a plaque of appreciation to Martha's family and making memorial donations (\$10 from each member) to the Toston Youth Group. At Martha's funeral, there were many comments on how proud she was to be on the RAC.

DECISION: Hank will contact the Kimpton family regarding the youth group. A follow-up letter will be sent to all RAC members.

It was noted that Cedron appeared in an article in *Townsend Star* newspaper.

FIELD OFFICE UPDATES***Nancy Anderson - Missoula Field Office:***

The Missoula Field office is the only BLM office in Montana that is involved in the Upper Columbia River Basin Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). WO will have a meeting on it next week, and we hope to have a supplement Draft EIS out in December or January. The RAC could look at this EIS at its next meeting. Jim Owings, formerly the Butte District Manager, is working on this project out of Boise, Idaho.

A cooperative group (BLM, county reps, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks) is looking at leafy spurge in the Blackfoot. BLM may take the lead on the EA; this could be a future RAC topic.

Missoula an OHV open house on December 7 with a good turnout (about 100 people).

Missoula is finishing the Elk Creek EA and joint landscape analysis with the Lubrecht Forest. Expect an EA early next year. The decision on whether to include the lynx is due in early January. So far there is not much guidance on lynx management.

Comment: Another species of concern will be the sage grouse.

Weeds: What can the RAC do to get more funding from the Washington Office (WO) to treat weeds? It would be helpful to have long-term funding. Weed districts are starting up. BLM channels monies to landowners to buy chemicals for weed treatment.

Scott Powers mentioned that the Dillon Field Office will be starting a contract with a person with goats to treat knapweed. Seed will be planted, which will be trampled in by the goats. This will be an experiment.

Comment: MSU research shows that an effective treatment is to first spray to kill older plants, then let the goats eat the younger plants.

The schedule for westslope cutthroat trout is sometime in January.

Comment: In developing the statewide weed management plan, federal and county agencies could get together on the plan and work to get funding for all agencies.

Discussion: In some areas, independent contractors are doing the spraying. Hiring an independent business to spray weeds may be most cost-effective. Private landowners need to be responsible, too. State law is not being enforced to get landowners to treat weeds on their lands.

RAC members were advised of the upcoming open houses for the statewide OHV EIS.

Scott Powers - Dillon Field Office:

The Dillon FO has made a final decision on the Muddy Creek Allotment. Minor modifications were added to help accommodate Dean Welborn's concerns. This will be in court, but we will start implementation next year.

A scoping letter on the Centennials Travel Plan was mailed out. Many comments were received. A final decision is expected by July 1.

Dillon FO did an emergency closure in the lower Beartrap, focused on certain areas. The closure has been pretty successful. This winter we will rewrite the management strategy for the whole Madison River area. The area has been approved as a recreation fee demo site.

Access was completed on the Beaverhead River. There is an interim travel plan emergency order in place to limit vehicle use to existing roads and trails. Ducks Unlimited did the survey work for waterfowl ponds with flow-thru water. The work is aimed at improving waterfowl habitat.

We finished an 80-acre holding area with a dam in the Centennials. The dam will release into the Lima Reservoir to benefit waterfowl.

Axolotl Lake Exchange is still moving ahead. We are waiting for the appraisals on the disposal tracts and hope to close on this exchange next spring.

We are developing alternatives and stipulations for the Oil & Gas EIS.

100 mbf timber sale at Sheshur Lake.

Stone Creek Mine (talc) rehabilitation is finished.

Merle Good - Butte Field Office:

I am retiring December 31st after 34 years with the federal government. Rick Hotaling (Field Manager for the Malta Field Office) has been selected as my replacement. Rick will report to Butte on February 27. Steve Hartmann will be the Acting Field Manager in January and an Montana State BLM staff member will be Acting Field Manager in February. Gary Gerth also retires December 31. His position has been advertised and we have received 24 applications. Also, Darrell McDaniel (Whitetail-Pipestone Travel Plan) will retire December 31st.

In the near future the Butte FO will be trying to fill the Geologist/Environmental Engineer position for the Abandoned Mine Lands Program.

Canyon Ferry BLM and Bureau of Reclamation eagle program work is done for this year. Nearly 1,000 students went through the program. The number of eagles is down because of the lower salmon numbers. The Visitor Information Center has been closed for the winter.

The Ward Ranch Land Exchange will be pursued, with or without Land & Water Conservation Funding. The Conservation Fund will facilitate the exchange.

The Great Divide Ski Area Expansion has been approved and issued.

83 grazing permits were reviewed and issued this year. Three are still pending Native American consultation. We assessed nine allotments for Standards & Guidelines (S&G). The public was invited but no one participated. Five of the nine met standards; we are implementing changes on the others. Fourteen (14) permits will expire this coming year. Seventeen allotments are scheduled for S&G review in Fiscal Year 2000.

Phase One of the Devil's Elbow Recreation Site construction was completed this year on Hauser Lake. This coming year we will start Phase Two--MPC's contribution will be \$1,000,000 and BLM's will be \$500,000.

The \$200,000 Holter Lake administrative site is finished.

Our total fee collection totaled \$80,000 (mostly from the Holter Lake Recreation Site).

The Alta Mine reclamations are almost done. Reclamation at the Comet Mine/High Ore Creek will be finished this week. We will be doing more reclamation this coming year. The Wicks Smelter reclamation contract will start up this summer.

Butte FO released 28,000 bugs and sprayed 350 acres for weeds this year. We also had weed treatment contracts with counties.

Clancy/Unionville draft EIS and Landscape Analysis for the vegetation treatment and travel plan will out to the public in January, with a decision expected in February.

The Big Belts Travel Plan with the Forest Service is progressing with on-site planning. The final EIS should be out to the public by February 15.

Whitetail-Pipestone Travel Plan-an update will be given later this morning by Darrell McDaniel.

The Little Boulder River Draft EIS should be out in the spring of 2000.

We are starting another EIS with the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest Service on the Upper Clark Fork Drainage.

The South Elkhorns range and vegetation treatment decision was final a year ago. The Forest Services portion was appealed--they have completely stopped, but we are moving ahead with our implementation.

Q: Are there cabins for sale on Canyon Ferry?

A: BLM is hands off on that matter. The issue lies with the Bureau of Reclamation and the cabin owners.

Q: Has BLM signed on for the cutthroat restoration?

A: Yes, the State Director signed it several months ago.

POSSIBLE TOPICS/ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT RAC MEETING:

- Prescribed burning issue--presentation by Joe Casey and possible field trip in the spring to Dillon area
- Further OHV discussion
- Endangered species (cutthroat, sage grouse), impacts of being listed, what could be implemented to keep them off the list
- Presentation on the Elkhorns plan for restoring westslope cutthroat trout (Montana Dept of Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Forest Service)
- Letter to the Dept. of the Interior to get staff hired for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Montana
- Upper Columbia River Basin Supplemental EIS and possible RAC involvement--briefing by Nancy Anderson
- Weeds/county contracts proactive weed approach briefing by Ted Coffman (Annual Weed Associations meeting in Great Falls January 11-13)
- Update on PILT/other legislative matters, also provide *Public Land News* publication to members
- Whitetail-Pipestone Travel Plan review/comment period

WHITE-PIPESTONE UPDATE (Darrell McDaniel)

November 15th was the due date for the draft and it was not finished. A new alternative was developed this summer from comments we received. This alternative is now being analyzed. Right now, we are looking at the cumulative effects and economic values. The Montana Conservation Crew installed 400 to 600 water bars on roads this summer. It looks like the middle of January will be the earliest we will have a draft out or results.

Q: This alternative in response to comments--how is it different?

A: The public wanted loop trails and continuous longer length trails, which we had not considered. This is major in the new alternative. The RAC could address this new alternative at its next meeting.

STATEWIDE OHV REVIEW/DISCUSSION

Jean Nelson-Dean gave a slide presentation on the Statewide OHV EIS and Plan Amendment that covered: the definition of motorized vehicles, the lands covered in the EIS, the purpose of the plan, the Executive Orders that mandate OHV use is an acceptable use of public lands, monitoring, and internal and external review.

The plan's purpose is to prevent further resource damage (the public is concerned about OHV impacts) and provide interim direction until specific management is planned.

Scoping identified other issues and 5 alternatives were developed.

Schedule of EIS process: Feb. 24, 2000 - Comment Period Ends

May 2000 - Proposed plan Amendment/final EIS

June 2000 - BLM Record of Decision

Comments:

(Bob Zimmerman passed out to all members present copies of "Draft-The ORV Sham Plan" and the "Montana State Lands Policy Alternative.")

Bob Z: I thought we had some specific requirements, ex: "closed" unless posted "open." Executive Order 11644 directs agencies to protect the resources of the land, handle user conflicts, etc. The interim

decision leaves a lot of loopholes-must follow up, priorities-feels the Forest Service does not get the job done.

Doug: This document shows a cooperative effort to reach a solution-trying to get a consistent management scenario-want a legitimate decision on roads and trails. The key is enforcement, but enforcement will not work unless there are closures and restricted areas.

Scott P: With this document we hope to enforce use restrictions more easily. It's hard for people to understand what's open and closed--this plan will make it more clear.

Bob Z: To have enforcement, it should all be "closed" unless posted "open."

Doug: Why?

Greg: Is there a way to include an enforcement package with this EIS?

Bob Z: How will you know if someone is going cross-country? This will not work in the mountains-we have too many mavericks. Want to put the breaks on this: closed unless posted open. Pay close attention to Posewitz's letter-State Lands policy was thrown out.

Dan: Are there any additional dollars for enforcement? Any estimate of the additional cost to implement enforcement? Is there some sort of monitoring to measure effectiveness of the plan?

Hank: There is no detail on monitoring in the plan.

Dan: How are you going to monitor the decision's effects? The Forest Service is not implementing anything unless there are funds to monitor.

Scott P: We also have an internal concern on how we can monitor/enforce. We keep trying our best.

Mel: Seems like we have a good thing that we can work on in the future-everyone seems concerned about the interim--let us get through this interim schedule as quickly as possible.

Bob: Need to drive a stake in the ground--not 2-10 years.

Doug A: Participate in our programs to prevent or mitigate, or do something of your own. Nearly \$1 million is to be granted from OHV user groups for trail maintenance, etc. We challenge anyone else to do same. Address the issue straight forward.

Bruce: BLM flubbed, didn't listen to our baseline. It's estimated that 1% of users go off trails. Protecting a system created by 1% of the users--that is strange. Once more use occurs, road closures are going to be more difficult.

Greg: What you're saying is 'the only way is to get my way.'

Bob: Stop the boneheads.

Doug: We think this plan is a good start.

Bob Z: Where is the claim of those who have left the land unscarred?

Greg: Rhetoric.

Bob Z: This document is useless.

Hank: The tradeoff at this level is not to restrict use to designated roads and trails, in exchange for the organized OHV acceptance. If trails are there now, they can use them, but they cannot create new ones. How much damage can be done during the interim? How many trails with established use will be allowed to continue? The definition of open vs. closed is the crux.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AT 11:30 - 12:00

Duane Johnson, local Butte businessman, gave everyone a "Discussions of OHV (ATV) Use On Public Lands" Handout. I've looked at this OHV plan. Are you locking yourself into these alternatives? Are you looking at the whole picture. This is something for you to think about.

In this handout I have expressed my feeling about this process and my primary concerns for OHV limits. The No. 1 concern for me in Western Montana is the spread of noxious weeds. In the next 5 to 10 years, we're going to be in big trouble if we don't stop the spread of weeds.

My Concern No 2. Is securing habitat for wildlife. ATVs are going everywhere-we need to control areas.

Concern No. 3 is preservation of vegetation.

Concern No. 4 is for aesthetic values. There is a need as for ATV use areas and a need for non-ATV use areas. No one will win totally. Everyone will win a little bit and lose a little bit.

Implementation of ATV use limits on public lands. Identify the critical areas and take action now. Consider input from members of the public like me. Regulations for main trail--define which are the most important trails to keep open. I believe in game retrieval. There needs to be signing for what use is permitted.

Horse use--if we restrict ATVs and not horses, we are going to be in deep doodoo. ATV users have lots of funds and will take it to court. ATVs and horses both spread knapweed.

We need fines for illegal use of ATVs-we need to get tough.

Timing is important in restrictions. The public needs time to adjust to new restrictions-I suggest 1 year. Update restrictions each year if needed.

Mel: Hounds tongue can be spread by horses, but also by backpackers, or any animal including wildlife.

Duane: We would try to mitigate as much as we could.

Hank: Have you looked at the five alternatives? Which do you support, or are you suggesting a new one?

Duane: I have my own agenda, just as others here do too. I think these alternatives will be changed to add a couple more. The Dakotas and eastern Montana have different situations/issues than does western Montana.

Hank: Our influence is not any greater than yours as a group or as individuals. We have to deal with the alternatives as presented or modifications thereof.

Duane: Enforcement will be done by responsible members of the public. It's up to us. This handout is my interpretation. I ask that you try to make it workable, strict, keep trails open, don't close everything. We need to educate people--it can happen. Observation is also a key to this. Thanks for your time.

Mel: I like about 90 percent of what you have here. Education on game retrieval is necessary.

Duane: Many animals can be retrieved without the use of ATVs.

RAC members agreed to end the OHV discussion.

(Lunch 12 - 1:20 p.m.)

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS OVERVIEW (George Hirschenberger, BLM Missoula Field Office; Janet Bean-Dochwahl, Landscape IDT Leader, USFS Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF)

Janet Bean-Dochwahl gave a presentation on Landscape Analysis on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (see handout by the same name).

Q: Will Forest Service plans become a compilation of individual LA plans within the FS?

Our region would like to go in that direction. We still have to look at how it all fits together, but the ideal would be a compilation of individual directions.

Q: How are efforts reconciled with other planning efforts such as the Upper Columbia River Basin (UCRB) and Presidential planning efforts?

On the Beaverhead-Deerlodge, the west side is affected by UCRB, we did an LA on the Lower Clark Fork and a sub-basin review in Rock Creek, which goes only as far as laying out data and opportunities (a step before watershed analysis).

In the LA, we will have to look at recommendations and see how the President's roadless initiative affects us. We are mapping roadless areas and reinventorying to meet all of the President's proposal and Washington Office requirements. We won't know until we go thru EIS process.

George Hirschenberger gave a presentation on the "Elk Creek Assessment and Implementation" (see handout by the same name).

The Elk Creek LA, started in 1985, was our first LA effort. Agencies have different philosophies on management. The Lubrecht Forest started walk-throughs for a quick, subjective look. Elk Creek was an opportunity to work with the Lubrecht Forest and the Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC).

A primary example is upland vegetation, the historic cover type. Where to begin? We tried several different ways. We generated a map on potential cover type. The cover type in west Montana is mostly driven by fire. We didn't do much with pasture lands--primarily dealt with conifer forests.

A computer program at MSU can come up with probabilities by projecting a fire travel path, the lay of land, etc., to get a probability of disturbance. We used this to evaluate risk, for example, what do we do about the western spruce budworm? The computer program can show susceptible stands and alert to lethal fires. We looked for risks in the analysis (fire, pine beetle, budworm, etc.).

We also looked at the kind of stand conditions, current and historic, and compared those to the walk-through inventories. We looked at the changes, what made the changes, the current conditions, and tried to determine where it may be out of whack-we ask if we want to make a change. How much risk is there and how much will it depart from historic conditions?

We set up two superunits based on risk and departure from historic conditions; this came under the umbrella of the *Garnet Resource Area Plan*. We identified units and treatments in specific areas.

The ownership overlay was the last thing we did. We asked whose lands would be affected: DNRC, Lubrecht Forest, BLM, BLM harvest units, prescribed burn units.

This was just on the upland vegetation. We also did aquatic. (George handed out the "Elk Creek Assessment and Implementation") This map included Elk Creek land ownership, roads and streams.

(George gave a slide presentation on Elk Creek.) History of placer mining in the creek bottom as recently as the early 1990s. The understory was an important consideration. We wanted to bring more variety to the forest-stand thinning or conversion. We used a planting program to reintroduce ponderosa pine. We are doing some prescribed fire and stream bank stabilization. Since county roads can contribute to sedimentation and considering the erosive soils, we wanted to use harder surface roads, water bars, etc. We are doing an analysis on the Blackfoot River downstream from Elk Creek, and are moving toward an EIS. We are trying to keep the adjacent landowners informed--for them, roads are a big concern. The benefit: things are changing to agreed-upon future desired conditions. The NEPA is about done.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS Q&As and Discussion

In response to questions about desired future conditions:

George: We are talking with our neighbors, just now developing a recommendation for Nancy Anderson, then we will take it to the public. We will go through the public issues.

Janet: We come up with project proposals and recommendations. We can implement decisions that are already in concurrence with current forest plan decisions.

Q: Do other Forests and BLM tier to the statewide elk management plan? ASQ makes me shudder.

A: ASQ is established through the land use plan.

Hank: About the Gravellys, did the Forest Service consider asking those ranches and private landowners if they were interested in sitting in on the process or did it assume they had higher priorities?

Janet: At the very start, we sent letters to most of the large landowners and invited them to the first meeting, where we also invited them to participate further. We couldn't contact each ranchette--there are too many. We did try to contact the large landowners.

Q: A good presentation--I understand it better. How did the forest analysis and aquatic analysis fit together?

George: If we had problems, we would have taken care of the stream--we can't further impair a 303D-listed stream-- that's state policy. Removing cover would increase a peak in discharge into the stream.

Short discussion about desired future conditions (DFC) and scales of analyses. Discussion on whether historic conditions should always be the DFC and how the public is involved in determining the DFC.

Dan: The historic condition becomes the desired future condition; that is set up as the goal before the public is involved.

Bob Z: We've fragmented things so much that we are really in a reconstructive mode.

Dan: Sometimes the historic information is not explained--how did we get where we are now? It's an information base to work from.

FOLLOW-UP ACTION ITEMS

Hank: Plaque and donation memorials for Martha Montgomery.

Hank: We need a quorum, I may have to make phone calls the day before the next meeting.

Bruce: Will get a presenter on the Elkhorns plan for restoring westslope cutthroat trout. Will provide name and length of time needed for the presentation to Jean Nelson-Dean.

Meeting adjourned.

WESTERN MONTANA ZONE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting held September 1, 1999
in Dillon, MT

Next Meeting: December 8, 9:00 a.m.
BLM Butte Field Office
106 North Parkmont
Butte

Topics: Statewide OHV EIS, Landscape Analysis, WMRAC's role, and Honor Award

Members Absent: Bruce Farling, Dan Lucas, Tad Dale, JayLynn Hansen, Greg Schildwachter and Bob Zimmerman.

Members Present: Hank Goetz, Mel Montgomery, Martha Montgomery, Cedron Jones, Steve Antonioli, Doug Abelin, Ted Coffman, Chuck Swysgood, and Doug Rand.

Dillon Field Manager Scott Powers was the Designated Federal Official and facilitated the meeting because Jean Nelson-Dean was ill. Butte Field Manager Merle Good and Missoula Field Manager Nancy Anderson were present. Mark Goeden and Peggy Redick attended to provide history and information on the Muddy Creek Allotment.

Members of the public included Dean Welborn, Bob Welborn, Patty Rowland (attorney for the Welborns), Donna Sevalstad (Beaverhead County Commissioner), Debbie Barrett and Gary "Woody" Baxter (Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks).

RAC members expressed concern at the low attendance at the meeting. It was thought that the lack of focus on a major issue and focus for the RAC reduced members' interest.

FIELD OFFICE UPDATES

Nancy Anderson, Missoula Field Office:

Range/Grazing:

- Montana BLM underwent a Range Technical Procedures Review (TPR) by a BLM Washington Office staff team, who either visited each office or conducted an office review via a conference call. The team looked at the permit process and how we are doing our NEPA analyses. We expect to receive a report within the next several weeks.
- The Missoula Office issued 26 10-year permits using administrative determinations. Those permits were sent to the grazing operators last month.
- Rock Creek Drainage. The Decision Record on the leases went out recently.
- The Decision Record for the Brazier Allotment Management Plan (AMP) is complete. The protest period will soon be over.
- Lower Blackfoot Acquisition/Belmont. We issued a 2-year permit and we plan to do an Allotment Management Plan next year.
- Grazing Implementation Monitoring Module (Bull Trout): The bull trout effort remains a major workload. The Missoula office is the only BLM office in Montana covered in the bull trout opinion. This year was the first year for the grazing module. Letters were sent to all permittees requesting voluntary monitoring on their part. We are required to monitor 20 percent of all "may affect" allotments this year. An interagency team will review our implementation of the bull trout biological opinion. They will be here the week of October 4th and will look at projects on us and the Lolo National Forest.

Timber: We are offering nine timber sales at the end of the month (2 million board feet).

Elk Creek: The assessment covered 30,000 acres and was a joint effort with the Lubrecht Forest and Department of Natural Resource Conservation. Hank added that the effort looked at what was historically there and how they wanted the stands to look then agreed on general prescriptions.

When Nancy explained that the team used the concept of Desired Future Condition (DFC) and that it was difficult to get everyone to agree, Cedron questioned whether timber sale decisions were not already made by the team agreeing on a DFC. Cedron questioned whether the DFC is documented and supported by NEPA.

Nancy answered that the DFC was not supported by NEPA, but that assessments will change as there is new information, but the team needs to start with something. When new information comes assumptions may need to be changed.

Cedron expressed that the DFC seemed to be a key decision and should be the focal point for any public input process. Cedron and Hank want the RAC to address the issue of DFC in the future.

Fires: We have had a few fires. One was in a Wilderness Study Area (WSA). We will have to look at this in the future with the DNRC. We can fight fire in a WSA, but the question remains: do we allow heavy equipment into a WSA to fight fires?

Merle Good, Butte Field Office:

Range and Grazing: We had the Range TPR and a land exchange program review by the Washington Office. They thought we were doing things right.

We had about 80 grazing permits to renew this fiscal year. Most of those were offered with no comments received. Next year, we have 15 to renew, so we're over the hump. In some BLM offices, the renewals are being protested. The Standard and Guideline (S&G) permit schedule does not necessarily mesh with permit expirations, and we could not do new S&Gs on all 80 permit renewals. We attempted to involve the range user. NEPA for permit renewals and S&G analysis are, in most cases, on two separate schedules.

Congressional Tour: The Butte Field Office was part of a tour for Congressional staff members who work on the Interior Committee. They were very interested in the Lewis and Clark Trail Bicentennial and the abandoned mine land (AML) reclamation program.

Recreation:

- The Log Gulch and Departure Point construction project (\$200,000) for this year was finished this spring. Site improvements included a new water system, new concrete toilets, new electrical system, administrative building upgrade, a new garage and landscaping. \$300,000 worth of additional improvements are underway.
- A new administrative building and garage (\$200,000) are presently being constructed at the Holter Lake Campground.
- The Devil's Elbow Phase I construction (\$500,000 for dirt work, installation of toilets and a boat

ramp, layout of camping units and parking) is well underway. Phase II will be next year and will be cost-shared between Montana Power Company (\$1,000,000) and BLM (\$600,000). The site is scheduled to open about 2001. Fees will be collected. Phase III will include a Lewis and Clark interpretive display and new trails.

- The Holter Dam Recreation Site project has been delayed, pending completion of MPC's donation of the site to BLM. Improvements are planned for 2002 and 2003.
- Clancy-Unionville Travel Plan and Vegetative Manipulation EIS should be completed later this year.
- Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. This effort is growing. We submitted 26 requests for site improvements, interpretive displays, trails, etc., along the Missouri and Big Hole Rivers. Considerable funding may be coming from the WO, which would then result in a major new workload.
- Ward Ranch Exchange. The Conservation Fund bought the 2,000 acres from the Wards. BLM is forming a land exchange pool of isolated BLM tracts) with which to acquire the Ward Ranch lands. We have also submitted a request for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding. This land is prime wildlife habitat. We hope to close in June 2000. It has a value of \$2.5 million-- we hope to acquire it for \$2 million.
- Great Divide Ski Area Expansion. This project adds 397 acres of BLM land to the existing lease. There has not been much controversy to date. We plan to issue the final decision this week.

Abandoned Mine Lands:

- Indian Creek looks very good. Construction is about 80 percent complete. Indian Creek is now flowing where it did originally. More work remains (seeding, etc.).
- The Comet and High Ore Creek mining reclamation of four miles of streamside tailings is ongoing. At a cost of \$1,520,000, it is our biggest reclamation project to date.
- Alta and Wickes Smelter - Rehabilitation construction has begun.
- Red Wing/Waldy Mine Sites. Preliminary work is being done.
- Preliminary work has been initiated for the Rochester and Wallace Mill Site reclamation projects, which are located in the Dillon FO and Missoula FO, respectively.

Planning:

- The Montana Conservation Corps installed water bars in the Whitetail-Pipestone area. The Draft EIS is expected late fall or early winter. We are waiting on the soil inventory from the Forest Service. Merle expressed his interest in having the WMRAC give specific input on alternatives when the Draft Whitetail-Pipestone EIS comes out.
- The Forest Service decision on the South Elkhorns was appealed. BLM's decision was not appealed. Implementation is proceeding. The FS will have to separate its grazing decision from its other South Elkhorn decisions, and then reissue their decision. The FS Washington Office Coordinator for Reinvention Labs asked the Helena National Forest to develop and submit a charter, under his suggestion that the Elkhorns Cooperative Management Area may qualify as a reinvention project. If that distinction is received, it will allow us to experiment more and have more flexibility. Reinvention Lab charters must be approved by the Vice President and the Governor.
- The public comment period ended July 23 on the Big Belts. We are now working on an EIS with the FS. The most support seems to be for Alternative 4. OHV use remains a big controversy.

Scott Powers, Dillon Field Office:

Recreation:

- A scoping letter on the Centennials Travel Management Plan yielded a big response. A decision should be out next June. The statewide OHV EIS effort will have a large impact on upcoming travel plans.
- We did an emergency closure on the Lower Beartrap Wilderness due to indiscriminate use and significant damage to cultural and other resources. The area is closed to camping except in designated camping spots. We are getting good cooperation. We will manage the use until we develop a long-term strategy. The camping area will eventually be expanded, after which (under an emergency closure) fees will be collected.

Range and Grazing: The WO TPR found a few problems, but also acknowledged that the Dillon Field Office receives more oversight by the public than any other BLM office in Montana. NEPA coordination was requested, as well as the use of an interdisciplinary team process. We don't have the staff to always use an ID team, so we try to mix and match.

Land Exchanges/Acquisitions: We will close on the Beaverhead River parcel this fall. We have agreed to use The Conservation Fund as our facilitator for the Axolotl Lake and Maidenrock parcels.

Wildlife: We have a project in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited to create more waterfowl habitat in the Centennial Mountains. There won't be much cost to BLM. The Lima Water Users Association also supports this project.

Timber: A small (100,000 board feet, 25 acres) timber sale near Lemhi Pass is planned. This is a closeout of a 1980s timber sale that was on hold. It will convert to a post-and-pole sale in the next several years. The Forest Service has the road right-of-way at Lemhi Pass and will do some improvements.

Planning:

- The Oil and Gas EIS is on schedule. A brochure describing the alternatives will be out soon. The members asked for a copy of the brochure.
- The Draft Statewide OHV EIS is circulating internally and soon will be available for public review. About 1,400 comment letters came in. Four key issues were summarized from the responses we received. Chuck Swysgood asked for a break out of what percentage of comments each issue received. The members asked for a summary of the issues in the OHV EIS.

MUDDY CREEK ALLOTMENT REVIEW:

Mark Goeden and Peggy Redick provided background for a review of the Muddy Creek Allotment

Mark discussed the history of the Muddy Creek allotment. The Dillon FO started on this allotment in 1990 and a decision was made in 1992 to modify the AMP. They did the EA with some alternatives and a decision was issued in June 1993. That decision was protested. A Section 8 consultation was requested by the permittees. A Section 8 consultation is a formal process in Montana where the Governor sets up a group of people to review the matter. We held off issuing a final decision until the Section 8 consultation was done. A 1-year authorization was issued in 1993 to allow the Section 8 group to complete their report. This authorization was appealed, but the appeal was dismissed.

The BLM issued a final decision in May 1995. The BLM never received a full report from the Section 8 group. The 1995 decision was appealed. Since that time we have issued 1-year authorizations. The 1995 decision allowed a 250-head permit under stringent guidelines. No one was happy with the decision, not the permittee, not the environmentalists, not the BLM. BLM requested that the Office of Hearings and Appeals remand the case back to BLM; where we would include the information collected since 1995

and issue a new EA and decision.

The BLM did a scoping letter in December 1998 and gave notification to all those involved initially, as well as listing the plan in our Quarterly Project List. The office received 18 responses. Scoping comments were summarized and narrowed down to 14 issues, primarily riparian, water quality, wildlife habitat, westslope cutthroat trout, bighorn sheep, livestock management, archaeology, missing components (such as bison), fire, areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs), wilderness study areas, monitoring data, social and economical impacts.

The BLM asked people to provide additional information and then took that information and other public input and distributed a data summary to the public in April 1999. One public meeting was held in Dillon on April 22, 1999. Five people attended the meeting. On June 1 we completed our analysis and put together alternatives based on the input we had from comments. The BLM evaluated the input on the EA and issued a proposed decision on July 27, 1999. There have been five protests on the proposed decision. The protests to the proposed decision are addressed in the final decision.

The proposed decision was developed by asking the interdisciplinary team to go through issues taken from scoping and look at the alternatives from the EA. Each alternative was evaluated on how it addressed the issues. Several issues dealt with ACEC, which is a land use plan process. The area was suggested as an ACEC because of watershed conditions, riparian areas, archaeological sites, and wildlife habitat. We addressed those issues involved in the concept of an ACEC in the proposed management of the allotment.

Fairly significant changes from the 1995 decision were made in the 1999 decision. Livestock numbers were increased. Guidelines were simplified but still remained adequate enough to protect resources. There are a lot of wildlife (sage grouse, and bighorn sheep) concerns. The BLM looked at the upland, condition, riparian areas, special status species, water quality concerns, and erosive soils.

The decision initially allows for 350 head of cattle, a season of use of June 20 with flexibility to turn out 5 days early. The movement was based upon historic use. The system is designed to be a six-pasture system. Two pastures will be rested each year to maintain elk winter forage and cover for other wildlife and for watershed protection.

The proposed decision calls for 35 percent upland utilization, and a sedge stubble height of

4 inches on riparian areas, except on Muddy Creek and McNinch Creek where the stubble height requirement is 8 inches. Flexibility allows staying in a pasture as long as use is within the guidelines.

Mark was asked how the proposed decision contrasts with historic use and stated, "500 head to 750 head in rapid rotation were allowed in the late 1980s thru 1992. Prior to that 500 head from June 15 to November 15. Since 1993, only 250 head have been allowed. On two of the lower pastures, the permittee can go on June 15. The proposed action added a pasture back into the rotation and added more flexibility. The Sourdough Pasture (1,100 acres) adds about a section back into the system. The proposed decision would allow up to 400 cattle and the season of use of June 15 to October 15, if the guidelines are met. After evaluation, we felt we were meeting the Standards and Guidelines on this allotment. A large part of the riparian areas are in Functioning Condition; others are making progress. We felt we were close enough to say we met the Standards and Guidelines."

Mark was asked if they knew what the fish population was like in the past ten years. He answered, "We did a fish population estimate. There are a few brown trout, and the westslope cutthroat trout look like they are doing well. A barrier has been put in to keep other fish out. There are good, healthy fish in good numbers."

Mark was asked what other changes there were to historic use other than the reduction of cattle numbers by 100. He answered, "The grazing rest system went from resting each pasture once in 6 years to resting each pasture once in 3 years. The proposal increases the number of cattle currently authorized from 250 pairs to 350, with the potential to run 400 pairs."

Mark was asked what the protests were. He answered, "We received protests from several individuals. Protests ranged from: 'data gathering did not follow NEPA' to 'the issues were not adequately addressed.' One protest came from the Gallatin Chapter of the Montana Wilderness Association. Another came from the permittees saying the guidelines were too stringent and the numbers were not high enough, and that there would be economical impacts. We received another protest from a Billings individual about addressing the impacts on fisheries and wildlife due to increasing the cows from 250 to 350. He didn't think we had adequate information to address the impacts. Other individuals had questions on why we did not gather specific information. Other issues were that we didn't have scientific support for the use levels and stubble heights. The protests went from one side to the other. We have 5 protests and 59 points so far. We are not finished going through all of the protests. We are still trying to sort out the points of protest, which appear to be mostly about the adequacy of the EA, NEPA compliance, coordination, threatened and endangered species, use guidelines, and ACECs."

Cedron commented, "The decision gives more flexibility; there are two measures for turning into the next pasture rather than fixed times, with a provision to go to 400 head. Is that the flexibility you mentioned?"

Mark answered, "It provides flexibility for staying shorter or longer periods, more frequent rest, more

recovery time for some areas. It builds in a safety net for some riparian areas."

Mark was asked where stubble height and utilization would be measured. He answered, "Stubble height is measured along entire stream reaches. We know we won't meet it 100 percent, but we said 90 percent is adequate. The permittee does the monitoring and BLM does spot checks--it's something we can measure easily. Dean Welborn seems to know where he's at in relation to stubble height on the allotment. He knows when to keep cows out and when to string a temporary electric fence. There is flexibility for the permittee to use tools, such as the electric fencing...The trend has been showing improvement, and these utilization criteria are the ones we have been applying."

Cedron commented, "Let's add direct monitoring criteria, and review the fisheries and wildlife habitat needs. We could ask the protestors to participate in the process. To reach a status quo is to convince both sides that the bottom line is really OK. Bottom line is not stubble height or utilization."

Mark replied, "It's not for us either. The real questions is: Are we making changes in plant communities and riparian areas or maintaining what we have? We picked specific areas and described a Desired Future Condition. On some sites the Desired Condition is to have more willow canopy. If we meet these objectives, we feel we've been successful. The guidelines are only tools to achieve that."

Mark commented that most of the protests said that the tools the BLM used to evaluate the area were wrong. Cedron felt that the BLM needed to address the protests and then move on.

Chuck Swysgood commented, "The current permit has been reduced some 60 percent to the interim numbers. The guidelines contradict each other. How can goals be accomplished for a functional area when one guideline calls for 35 percent utilization and a 4-inch upland stubble height and an 8-inch stubble height in riparian areas? How do you make those happen, even with those restrictions? It seems impossible to accomplish guidelines like the ones in this decision."

Scott responded that the 8-inch stubble height applies only to Muddy Creek and lower McNinch Creek. The pure genetic strain of westslope cutthroat trout in this area requires the BLM to provide specific management, and applies to only that one small area.

Mark stated that the 4-inch stubble height applies in the other riparian areas. Fragile watershed conditions need cover; we have to meet elk winter forage needs, sage grouse habitat, and bighorn sheep habitat requirements. He stated, "we set a 35 percent use level to cover these issues. We know the utilization levels will be difficult to meet in some areas, but it gives BLM the flexibility to manage these

areas for those resources. This is not easy. Dean and I have discussed when to distribute his cattle. It is difficult to manage the riparian resource in the smaller drainages. As the riparian areas improve, it will become easier to meet guidelines."

Martha asked about the water sources for the allotment. Mark answered that there were some developed springs, but because the allotment is in a wilderness study area there is a limit to the water developments that can be installed.

It was asked how the cattle would move from pasture to pasture. Dean Welborn answered that the grazing plan was developed to allow easier cattle movement. He stated it was difficult when the pastures needed to be rested one year.

Mel commented that the Welborns should be able to start with 400 cattle and then reduce down from there if it didn't work.

Mark stated that recommendations were 300, 350, and 400 head and that the BLM felt 350 was a good risk.

Mel asked what the risk was if the BLM started at 400 cattle and then reduced numbers if needed.

Scott commented that an option like that wasn't as viable and defensible option as the proposed action and whatever decision is made has to stand up in court.

Access issues to Muddy Creek were discussed in terms of who had the responsibility for washed out roads and ditches. In case of a large storm event it was thought there might be problems in the area.

Cedron questioned the scientific and legal justification to reduce cattle numbers in the 1995 decision.

Mark answered, "Take 500 cattle multiplied by $\frac{2}{3}$ = 330 head ($\frac{2}{3}$ of the allotment) because we are now resting approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of the allotment each year, compared to using all of the allotment, most of the adjustment can be explained by the amount of area being rested each year. The decision was designed to take care of existing problems. We are currently at proper functioning condition or we are

making progress. Our data shows that."

Comments were made that the plan should allow for 500 cattle while improving the riparian areas. Peggy Redick mentioned that there needed to be 4 to 6 inch riparian area stubble height each year in order to achieve recovery of the riparian areas.

Hank commented, "The more effort Dean puts on the allotment may result in more flexibility. There's a point where Dean will have to say that he's done all he can do. BLM has to have resources to periodically check grazing operators. Do you feel can invest time and effort in this results-oriented plan? Does BLM have the resources to do the necessary monitoring? Let the permittees manage more and let BLM do the 'policing.' "

Dean responded, "It's very marginal with anything under 500 head. This year we spent a lot of time with our cattle. When we were coming up close to the guidelines in the riparian areas, we moved the cows. We monitored several areas on the uplands--they were running 10 percent or under. Most areas showed no signs of utilization. On one ridge that had little grass, the utilization was up to 25 percent. We got less than 10 percent utilization on the large areas."

Hank asked Dean Welborn if he had any solutions.

Dean answered, "We are making improvements, but I don't think we have to go that fast. Fifty percent (50 percent) utilization is plenty to keep the riparian areas on the upswing. The Forest Service recommended a utilization and the BLM signed off on it. Two days after Mark and I looked at the area, a storm made the stubble height flat. We were out of that pasture in August. I spend all of my time either keeping the cattle there or moving them. There are plenty places to water, and I can hit two or three of the main places, and get the cattle distributed. The 4-inch stubble height is too restrictive and we can't live with it. When my cows first go on, they want to hit the wet areas; we push them out of there. We do the best we can."

Martha commented that reductions in numbers will have an economic impact on the Welborns and that the plan seemed more oriented to wildlife rather than being a livestock grazing plan. Martha commented to Dean Welborn that cows can be retrained and so could people.

She stated, "Folks have to accept change to survive. Some of these plans have worked. If this plan doesn't work, go to Plan B. In our cattle association, everyone takes a month to herd. We kept moving the cows out of riparian areas and up to the developed springs--it finally worked. The cows are not

coming back down. It's a wonderful thing to see that a cow has a brain. This is hard and it takes more hours and more dedication but it works. Before you go on, look where the elk have gone on, then see what the cows are being blamed for that is really an elk impact."

Dean commented that it is hard to put in lots of effort and then get a 60 percent reduction in your cattle numbers.

Ted Coffman asked what the elk population was historically and currently.

Dean Welborn answered, "About 85 bighorn sheep were transplanted into this area. There are fewer elk today than there was back then. The Fish and Game works well with us, lots of cow tags. We would like the BLM to ease up on its restrictions. We have been working well with Mark Goeden and Scott Powers. We've backed off on the willow utilization and have helped with spring development. Next year's permit numbers have to be attainable and profitable."

Steve stated that he liked the plan though he felt for the Welborns. He felt that the data to move to 400 cattle would probably prove out, but he liked the gradual improvement in numbers and the rest system.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Donna Sevalstad commented that Beaverhead County is concerned about its tax base, about maintaining it and that they would prefer the Welborns over a subdivision.

POSSIBLE FUTURE RAC ISSUES:

Scott Powers, Dillon Field Office:

1. **Forestry:** Scott felt a RAC subcommittee could help the Dillon FO work through developing a long-term strategy to manage the timber base and to improve the FO's ability to offer more timber and firewood sales. Scott felt it would be an issue for the RAC because the BLM has an obligation to offer a reasonable amount of timber but no matter what the level of harvest there is controversy.

Suggested Role: A subcommittee to participate in the proposed action.

2. **Wilderness:** Scott felt the RAC could help develop a long-term management strategy for the Beartrap Wilderness Area to manage and anticipate increased use. Scott felt that the range of perspectives on the RAC could be helpful to develop a good plan.

Ted Coffman was interested due to weed and OHV problems he would like addressed in the area. Mel stated he would like to look at problem areas on the ground and that is how he would like the RAC involved. Mel felt the BLM could develop the alternatives and then let the RAC members discuss the alternatives. Cedron felt the role of the RAC should be is telling the BLM what it should do. He felt the BLM could make a decision and go to the public with the decision. Once the decision was made the RAC could be a forum for finding middle ground.

3. **Centennials Travel Management Plan:** Scott felt the RAC could be helpful in developing the travel management plan.

Mel again stated that he felt the RAC should not get involved in every issue just the "hot-bed" ones. Scott asked what people thought would keep people interested in the process of the Resource Advisory Council. He asked what would drive the members of the RAC.

Chuck commented, "We should be concentrating on what the public has to say. Some projects, for example the Beartrap and Centennials for myself, have contentious issues. It would fit into the overall view of the agency as to what they are going to do with a particular analysis. I have trouble understanding what kind of input is important to this agency without having an idea of the overall direction and whether the people want to be led that way. People are having trouble with these new directions; they have a fear of what could come, and what impact their participation has on the ultimate decision process."

Chuck continued, "Land use falls on our doorstep before anyone else's. A county's economical base depends on federal- and/or state-owned lands; their ability to survive is impacted, especially when things change from what they have been. This RAC is to advise BLM in the direction they need to go on management decisions. This RAC should have some say on what direction BLM goes on an analysis. If BLM goes ahead with a certain decision, then the RAC should know why. These decisions have a direct impact on an area."

A discussion on landscape analysis followed. Merle commented that a landscape analysis process has been used in the Elkhorn Mountains for eight years in conjunction with the Forest Service without controversy.

The question was asked if private property was included in the landscape analysis. Merle answered that private property is never included unless a landowner asks to have it included.

Chuck commented, "From our perspective, until people feel comfortable on what a landscape analysis encompasses and how it fits into the overall management of public lands, there will be resistance against it. That is not good for either side--nothing can be accomplished."

Mel commented that people don't know how to get involved in a landscape analysis process. He felt the RAC should involve itself in landscape analyses processes.

Nancy Anderson, Missoula Field Office:

1. Lower Blackfoot Landscape Analysis: Nancy suggested that the RAC could be involved in a review of the EA being done that will include AMPs and vegetation treatments or in any other way the RAC wanted to be involved.

Cedron asked if the landscape analysis was being done before the EA. Nancy answered, "Yes. The Resource Management Plan has land allocations, and unless something comes up in the landscape analysis, we won't change the Resource Management Plan. The landscape analysis helps to evaluate future actions. It is a process to pull together the existing conditions on the watershed. We need a decision on grazing. Leafy spurge is an issue. We envision it to be very controversial (i.e., herbicide close to water). This effort will involve adjacent landowners. I don't know what the role for the RAC would be."

3. Bull Trout, Weeds: Nancy felt these issues affected all three field offices.

Steve commented that he would like a presentation on the Elk Creek landscape analysis. He felt the

RAC should look at landscape analysis. He would like to look at methodology, findings, and what actions resulted for the analysis. Nancy commented that not each landscape analysis is done in the same way.

Hank responded, "We are going to have to define this. It seems like larger scale planning, and the change from small use-driven issues to a broader picture makes people nervous. There have been changes in use patterns. We've seen it in the timber program. We may have to define that, but it would be broad from a RAC standpoint. I would be interested to see the differences between the FS and BLM. I see a need for the FS and BLM to work together and not have differences when crossing imaginary lines."

Merle commented, "The landscape analysis is a process to determine a proposed Desired Future Condition. How proposed actions are implemented is subject to NEPA and full public involvement. There is some frustration on BLM's part with the RAC process. The RAC could work on planning stages. Sometimes BLM has to work within a quick time frame, and the RAC doesn't meet very often. Some RAC members may be interested and others may not be. The RAC members interested in a certain project, could meet about it. BLM is very busy with project implementation right now and we have fires to fight. The RAC meets seldom, and members seem very reluctant to work in subcommittees. I know the Butte Field Office could still use RAC input on the South Elkhorns, for example."

Merle Good, Butte Field Office:

1. River Use: Merle would like to have RAC participation with issues in the Big Hole River area such as outfitters and use fees.

Woody Baxter commented, "Four different agencies are involved with the Big Hole area. We are looking at the whole river. It concerns more than just the BLM, so I don't know if the RAC would work. We do need to communicate. I can see my agency working with BLM. We should keep the communication open. We would be glad to have some input."

2. Travel Planning: Merle asked whether the entire RAC wanted to be involved in specific plans, or just a subcommittee? Maybe members interested in a specific local project may want to work in a subgroup, then we could work with them on a more intense level. Bottom line, I'm asking the RAC to help us. It takes time for the entire RAC to become educated on an issue, and even more time when there is absence and turnover of the RAC members.

Cedron asked what help the RAC could provide on the Elkhorns. Merle answered, "We need a group of citizens, someone we can bounce things off of. Maybe it is something all of you can think about and discuss in the future."

Hank suggested that the RAC discuss landscape analysis at the next meeting because it is an issue that covers the three field offices.

Mel suggested that the RAC meetings could be changed to address general issues for part of the meeting and then more specific issues for the other part during a one-day meeting. There was support for that idea.

Members felt that the issues of the RAC's role and meeting structure needed more consideration and having more members involved in the discussion and wanted to continue thinking about it until the next meeting. Several suggestions were made to both manage specific and general projects/issues. Some felt that the meetings should remain general issue oriented.

RAC AWARD

Tad Dale's nomination of Blake Huntley for the State Director's Award was discussed. Reaction to the proposal was mixed. Some people felt that though he had contributed a great deal to the discussions on rangeland health during the development of the Standards and Guidelines, that he did not meet the specific criteria called for in the State Director's memo. Others felt that even if the criteria didn't fit exactly he should be acknowledged for the work he did. The Welborns were also suggested to be recipients of the award.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm.

Next meeting: September 1, 1999 at the Dillon Field Office, 1005 Selway Drive 406-683-2337 (map enclosed)

9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Chair: Hank Goetz was elected permanent Chair of the WMRAC. If you have questions or concerns about the next meeting he can be reached at 406-244-5589 (home) or 406-244-5524 (work) or you can call Jean Nelson-Dean at 406-494-5059.

All Council members were present at the meeting. Rich Maggio from the Dillon Field Office sat in for Scott Powers. Margie Ewing, Ranger, USFS Butte Ranger District, and Grant Godbolt, Ranger, USFS Whitehall Ranger District, also attended the meeting.

Merle Good, the Designated Federal Official for the meeting introduced the two new members: Ted Coffman and Chuck Swysgood. He made several announcements

- The Associate State Director, Fran Cherry, is going to Alaska as the new State Director
- Scott Powers, the Dillon Field Manager is recovering from surgery
- The scoping period for the off-highway EIS is over. As a result of the 35 open houses where approximately 1400 people attended as well as numerous mailings and news articles, 3000 comment letters were received.
- Nominations for the fiscal year 2000 Council members are now in Washington for approval.
- Six RAC members attend the field tour to the Whitetail/Pipestone area on Sunday. They thought the tour went well. People thanked Tad and Doug for arranging the tour.

Whitetail/Pipestone Travel Management Plan Briefing and Discussion

Jocelyn Dodge, USFS Butte Ranger District, and Darrell McDaniel, BLM Butte Field Office, briefed the Council on the five alternatives of the Draft Whitetail/Pipestone Travel Management EIS. The Draft EIS is not completed, but is expected to be completed by late summer. They handed out an Alternate Comparison Chart (Attachment #1) and explained each Issue.

Many questions and comments were made during the briefing. These comments ranged from specific questions on the comparison chart such as "What do the percentages, low, moderate and high mean?" to "How do you measure a solitude standard?" and "How are you going to enforce closure in such a large area without causing grief with the user groups?."

Requests: Martha Montgomery asked that the team provide the RAC members with a copy of Alternative #5. Steve Antonioli asked the EIS team to provide the logic behind the division of subunits to the members of the RAC.

The following are the questions and comments from the WMRAC. Answers or comments from agency personnel are italicized.

1. What do the percentages, low, moderate, high mean? *They refer to the development scale for recreation facilities. Low: dispersed in nature. Delineation for parking or camping would be provided. Site may include improvements such as a bulletin board or fire ring. Medium: Gravel surfacing on entrance road, spurs, and parking areas. Improvements such as tables, fire rings, toilet, garbage, etc. present. An example of this would be Toll Mountain Campground. High: Much the same as medium except that paved roads or access trails may be present to provide higher accessibility. An example would be Homestake Picnic area.*
2. Is there erosion control? *Yes. The BLM and Forest Service have installed waterbars and bridges to reduce erosion on portions of road and trails. Several of these erosion control projects have been done in partnership with local motorized groups.*
3. What does unimproved under #3 mean?
4. Are there groomed trails now? *No.*
5. How do you measure a solitude standard? *Solitude is very subjective and varies from person to person and the setting.*
6. Is threatened & endangered species being considered, i.e. Westslope cutthroat trout? *Yes - lynx, wolverine, bog lemmings, westslope cutthroat trout as well as others.*
7. How are you going to enforce closure in such a large area without causing grief within the user groups? All other areas have been closed so all the impacts are here. You cause grief in closures, but you cannot enforce it. *Answer: Users appear to heed the signs we have put up. It is not a closure of the entire area. Once we get a final decision we will have to build partnerships to make it work. The goal is to provide opportunities to motorized users but protect the resources.*
8. Need to get message out on partnerships - get out the message that it is not open or closed. Need to do stuff now. *Answer: We cannot do on the ground work until we have a final decision or we look pre-decisional to user groups. We have given the message that it is not either open or closed but managed use. People do not want to hear that message.*
9. Is there no hope to avoid lawsuits?
10. Tour folks want to see the work done to avoid resource damage rather than close areas. These people want to work with the agencies but don't want areas managed for the 1% that cause the damage. *Answer: Concepts of resource damage may differ. Some trails are not built to standards to avoid sediment dumping into stream. How much money can we put into it to provide really challenging routes?*
11. Are there costs figured into the alternatives to do reclamation of areas? *Answer:*
Currently EIS does not but it will. When we make a decision, it needs to be implemented within 3-5 years. We cannot act as if money is not an issue. We must be realistic.
12. None of these alternatives will work. We almost need to develop a new alternative. Look at what absolutely will not work - make a chart.

13. I am not sure I have the knowledge to create a new alternative. We are trying to get somewhere in the middle. Seems like #5 is the new proposed action. Seems like #5 is where we should focus.

14. Before we get too heavily involved, can these proposals be paid for? No sense in spending years on a proposal if it fizzles out at the end because it can't be paid for.

15. If we take away 1/2 the trails it will either concentrate use or cause other people to do illegal activities. You need to pick your spot for solitude. *Comment: The miles being proposed for closure are the areas that aren't being heavily used now.*

16. Permittees have to take responsibility for the public land they use - pay a price. The same process should apply to other users. User should have to pay a price when they buy their license. Make sure it can be paid for.

17. Agencies should steer away from the amount of roads open/closed. Should be based on where people want to go and the resource issue.

18. It boils down to a negotiation. Shouldn't be negotiating on just the number of roads open/closed. Alternative #5 seems like a good place to start. *Comment: Alternative #5 took in users' experience.*

19. No presence is not acceptable. What is the value of the existing presence. People seem willing to put their dollars where their mouths are. I don't think the details of this is for this RAC. Use the Montana Consensus Council with the stake holders. Get these people to the table. *Comment: That was tried. MTA refused - said they only had things to lose. So they were still unwilling to come to the table. We are going to try the Montana Consensus Council again. We were looking for stakeholders and that is why we brought this issue to the RAC.*

20. Number 1 thing the RAC should do is get the community involved in it.

21. I like Alternative #5 it provides routes, but all the smaller routes are closed. It minimizes end-of-road mentality. Continuing routes help people stay on roads. How do you make it more self-policing - have routes where other people can see what people are doing.

22. We need details so I suggest we get new or other groups to meet.

23. We need something in black and white - in writing. *Comment: When the draft EIS comes out (in about 6 weeks) you will have 90 days to review the 5 alternatives or come up with a 6th alternative, but there's not much time for a new one.*

24. I suggest we just make comments on the 5 - not a new one.

25. We should give BLM an idea of what we want but shouldn't get into details - we aren't that knowledgeable.

26. Players other than MTA are out there. Would RAC allow groups to make presentation? Have to have user groups as players/partners.

27. Willing to give but cannot sit across from someone who is unwilling to compromise. I don't think someone with that attitude is going to get us very far (a few cattle breaking their legs is no big deal comment). MTA is causing the friction and isn't going to help get things solved.

28. Mining City Riders were favorable towards Alt. #5. Educating, informing, and respecting the resources out there.

29. Put maps out there - must recognize the other interests that are included in the table. Get further input with the requirement that those proposals meet all the interests on the table.

30. Should get the reasoning on the road closures written up for everyone to understand. Get all the details.

31. Like to play the general role that Hank alluded to - aim for making comments like any other public member - think about the kinds of direction we want to give - not the details.

32. Heard MTA had ideas for fixing bridges instead of going down streams - culverts - MTA had ideas. If it could be generated in a positive way, it would be good. We should be able to come up with an alternative that will work.

33. If roads are closed can they be obliterated or rehabilitated - closure alone will not get cooperation. If we close them, what will you do with them? *Answer: Some of the roads provide recreational opportunities for other users. So agencies will be doing different things with them. The table hasn't addressed that.*

34. I don't think you can sit on the RAC and get into details - give feedback to BLM and USFS. Give them a feeling of what we want for the area.

35. I agree - we shouldn't try to micro-manage. We can give broad guidelines but not details.

36. I second Cedron and Jaylynn we don't want to micromanage and tie the managers' hand

Round Robin Comments/Possible Decisions

The RAC participated in a Round Robin in order to make decisions on how the RAC wanted to participate in the development of the Whitetail/Pipestone Travel Management Plan development and decision.

Comments:

1. Provide general guidelines, not specific road closures - resources - resource health - overall guidance.
2. General comments on major elements encompassed in Alternative 5 - reasoning used - still be open to listening to groups who feel they have not been heard. (Public Meeting).
3. Comment during 90-day period - try to reach consensus on elements of alternative - want to have feasibility and implementation input information before discussing.
4. Start with Alternative #5 because it is a culmination of public comments - good place to start.
5. General guidelines from the RAC for this effort.
6. Work on Alternative 5 and go from there.

7. Everyone (stakeholders and RAC members) sit at the table and look at the big map of Alternative 5. What if the user groups/interest groups came together and look at Alternative 5. RAC should be able to look at what is developed out of that process - plan from agencies on how they would implement.
8. Implementation to have general guidelines, have definition of what terms mean. "What does closure mean". Ask public to be accountable.
9. Like to have an explanation of what they were getting to by subunit of Alternative 5 - know the criteria.
10. Like to see RAC have a one day open house. Let interested groups come in - give presentations - round table to discuss Alternative 5.
11. RAC comments should identify the logic to come up with Alternative 5 - should give people one more chance to improve Alternative 5 - if we find benefit to their ideas and suggest the agencies incorporate them into Alternative 5.
12. Want logic to the subunit objectives (Alternative 5). RAC explore possibilities of kick- starting the community process - barbecue a possibility. Cost/Benefit per stakeholder presence discussion - question whether we should wait for EIS process to do work on the ground.
13. Remember the people in this process. Has to be a reason behind the decisions. Look at Alternative 5.

Decisions: After this discussion, the WMRAC voted on the following:

- 1: The entire RAC will not be proactive in getting the public's involvement into the Draft Whitetail/Pipestone Travel Management Plan - RAC agreed.
- 2: A sub-group of the RAC will go out to the public on the Draft Whitetail/Pipestone Travel Management Plan - RAC did not agree.
- 3: The RAC will meet toward the end of the 90-day comment period for the Draft Whitetail/Pipestone Travel Management Plan - RAC agreed.
4. Before the next meeting, advertise to the public that if they have a better idea than what is proposed, they should come to the meeting - RAC agreed.
5. The RAC agreed that Tad Dale's Award Nomination and the Field Office Updates be postponed until the next meeting.
6. Hank Goetz was elected permanent Chairman.

Attachments: 2

1 - Draft Alternative Comparison

2 - Excerpt from Chapter 3, Watershed Prioritization

MINUTES

Resource Advisory Council Minutes

for March 4, 1999, Meeting

Members Absent: JayLynn Hansen and Bob Zimmerman. Members Present: Hank Goetz, Tad Dale, Doug Abelin, Cedron Jones, Mel Montgomery, Dan Lucas, Doug Rand, Steve Antonioli, Bruce Farling, Martha Montgomery and Greg Schildwachter.

Rich Maggio from the Dillon Field Office sat in for Scott Powers who is recovering from a skiing accident. Jean Nelson Dean, the new Public Affairs Specialist for the Western Montana Zone, was introduced.

Temporary Chairman Hank Goetz and Merle Good, Butte Field Manager, opened the meeting. Merle gave the Council an update of the new member nomination process. The nominee's name for the elected official (vice Hegstad) is in Washington, awaiting approval. The nomination period for the vice-Clough position has closed. There were two nominations. The Field Managers will now recommend a primary and an alternate and send those names to the State Office.

A new Resource Advisory Council Honor Award has been established by State Director Larry Hamilton. RAC members were given a copy of the letter explaining the award.

Merle read the joint memo on Resource Advisory Councils, signed by the BLM State Director and the Forest Service (FS) Regional Forester, concerning FS participation in RAC meetings on an ad hoc basis. The RAC discussed their ideas on Forest Service involvement. They agreed to FS involvement on a case-by-case basis in an informal way, but would want to review any proposals that would formalize the FS getting into the RAC. Merle will coordinate with Hank on a resolution to forward to the State Director.

FIELD OFFICE UPDATES

Nancy Anderson, Missoula Field Office:

The Missoula Field Office is proceeding with bull trout conferencing as required.

They are continuing work on the Rock Creek EA which addresses 8 allotments that do not meet the Standard and Guidelines (S&Gs). The comment period has been extended until April.

They are awaiting the lynx listing.

An EA concerning 19 leases is almost ready for public release.

They are doing emergency regulations for recently acquired land along the Lower Blackfoot Corridor. The regulations will be consistent with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MDFWP) management rules for the Blackfoot.

Rich Maggio, Dillon Field Office:

A scoping notice will be going out to the public within the next couple of weeks on the Centennial Travel Management Plan. The effort will be focused on the Centennial Mountain area. Cedron and Mel requested to be kept informed.

Muddy Creek Allotment management planning effort is progressing on schedule. The decision is due out in June.

Dillon oil and gas amendment is behind schedule--there has been difficulty in producing the scoping notice. Should be coming out soon.

Recreation Site Plan development - A new Recreation Planner is on-board to replace our vacancy from last summer. We will be reassessing our existing sites this year to begin looking at the need to develop or modify plans for management. With increased use on all of our sites, new issues are arising that we need to deal with, i.e. damage to resources, weeds, safety, wilderness values, etc.

Grazing permit renewal and Standard and Guideline determination are major efforts for our Range staff.

Beaverhead Rock acquisition - We are looking into the possibility of jointly acquiring about 1,000 acres of wetland in the vicinity of Beaverhead Rock with the MDFWP. MDFWP and BLM currently administer lands in this vicinity. The acquisition would enable us to expand on the plans to develop a Lewis and Clark interpretive site, provide access to the Beaverhead River and protect the wetland site.

Beaverhead County is considering developing a resource management plan for state and federal lands. There was a public meeting on Feb 20 where a panel, made up of County Commissioners from Owyhee and Modoc Counties, discussed the benefits of having a county plan.

- County would be an equal partner with state and federal agencies.
- County would insist that federal and state land use plans (LUPs) be consistent with county plans.
- County resource planning committee could provide support to grazing permittees in the review of allotment plans.

The County Attorney is researching the legality of appointing a resource planning committee.

The joint effort with MDFWP is ongoing to radio-collar sage grouse to track their movement throughout the year to identify critical habitat needs.

Merle Good, Butte Field Manager:

The Bozeman Wild Horse & Burro adoption is set for May 1.

The 3809 Regulations are now in the *Federal Register*. Comments are due by May 10.

The Big Belt Travel Plan Draft has gone to the printers.

The last decision EA on the South Elkhorns was issued on January 8. We used the Standards and

Guidelines in this assessment.

The Devils Elbow Exchange has been completed and the land is now in BLM ownership. We are initiating a 3-phase development project for the recreation site.

The Clancy-Unionville draft EIS on vegetation management is out and we are now looking at the public comments.

We are busy with the Abandoned Mine Lands program. Our Indian Creek project is a \$448,000 commitment. We are also looking at the Alta/Wickes and Comet areas.

The Whitetail/Pipestone Recreation Plan Draft will be going out in early April for a 90-day comment period. Since the RAC said it wanted to be involved with this Plan, does it want to discuss the Alternatives? Form a sub-committee?

After much discussion the RAC decided they would hold a 2-day meeting in June, with an optional field trip the first day to look at the Tailpipe area again, and a meeting on the second day to review the public comments before making a decision. Doug Abelin and Tad Dale will work with Darrell McDaniel on the logistics of the field trip.

Merle handed out the Off-Highway Vehicle Preliminary Proposal booklet that has been given to the public at the open houses.

MINE RECLAMATION BONDING

John McKay, geologist gave a talk on Mine Reclamation Bonding and discussed the status of the Pegasus Mines in Montana.

UCRB

Dan Lucas gave an update on what is happening with the Upper Columbia River Basin. A draft of the ICBEMP will be ready by April 1 and finalized by September 15. Final decision will be made by midyear 2000.

SNOWMOBILE USE

Since this was Bob Zimmerman's topic and he wasn't at the meeting, the RAC had difficulty beginning a discussion on snowmobile use. Renee gave them a focus question, "What should be considered when reviewing snowmobile use for specific travel management plans?" After some discussion on trail grooming, designated routes, the effects on winter range and wildlife, etc., the RAC decided to look at the State of Montana's Travel Plan. Hank suggested an informal subcommittee be formed to gather information from various EIS/Management Plans and then report back to the entire RAC. Subcommittee members are: Mel Montgomery, Cedron Jones and Doug Abelin.

BRAINSTORM LIST

The RAC reviewed the list of items generated at the December meeting that they want the OHV team to consider. Two modifications were made. Greg made the motion, seconded by Steve, that the brainstorm list from the 12/10/1998 meeting, as modified be, forwarded to the Interagency OHV team for consideration in preparing the Statewide EIS.

INTERAGENCY OHV TEAM SHOULD CONSIDER:

What baseline will be used to determine what is "existing"?

Definitions in general.

That the definition of existing road or trail should be:

Where the passage of vehicles, animals, or people has worn a continuous path of mineral soil.

How to define a road.

That area-specific travel plans currently in effect will not change as a result of this EIS.

How to tie the plan to the format of Standards and Guides.

The baseline should be the existing mapped roads and trails.

Wildlife Species.

Endangered Species.

Previous recommendations made by RACS.

That exceptions on a regional/local level may be necessary.

The impact that development of the Statewide plan will have on future travel management.

What types of vehicles are being addressed?

Identification of loops instead of dead end routes.

That the final product should follow S&G format.

Differentiating use (types of vehicles) on trails versus roads.

Encouraging partnerships and environmental projects.

Using gas tax money for rehabilitation work.

RS2477 roads and trails and other historic use. (Added)

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Four members of the public attended and addressed the RAC.

1. Don Mazzola, Montana Wilderness Association, Missoula:

Handed out portion of 43CFR Ch.11, Part 8340, Off-Road Vehicles, and asked the members to please

review them. (Copies are enclosed for members not present.) These regulations address legally established uses. He is concerned about the 10-15 year timeframe for mapping the roads and trails. He also thought it important to address the question: Does a trail serve a public transportation need? He also wants the members of the snowmobile subcommittee to look at legally established uses.

2. Alan Brown, President of Montana Snowmobile Association:

He said that RACs have never been interested in snowmobiling in the past. Offered to help the subcommittee with information they want. He talked about MSA's experience in assisting federal agencies with enforcement issues in the Absorkee Beartooth Wilderness and offered assistance to BLM. He asked to be invited back when the subgroup reports to the RAC on their findings.

3. Bob Pellet, President-at-Large, Montana Snowmobile Association, Cut Bank:

He is on the State Snowmobile Advisory Committee. Doesn't agree with "closed unless posted open"--wants to keep as many things as possible open for everybody. He commented about the lack of notification regarding the RAC meetings. It was explained that news releases are sent to all the daily and weekly newspapers in western Montana but it is the papers' prerogative to print the news releases. He would like to see a notice of meetings sent to the various clubs around the area. He also hopes that notification of special projects is spread more widely.

4. Bruce Taft from Butte:

Said he was representing the handicapped users of off-road travel. Wanted to know if there would be a handicapped program and wanted the RAC to consider winter use in the Whitetail-Pipestone area for off-road travel.

Followup Action Items

1. Merle to coordinate with Hank in writing a "resolution" regarding Forest Service involvement in RAC meetings, which will be sent to the BLM State Director.

2. Hank will coordinate with Merle on sending the revised Brainstorm List to the Interagency OHV team.

3. When the Tailpipe EIS is published, send copy to each RAC member.

NEXT MEETING

Monday, June 7, beginning at 9 a.m. at the Butte Field Office

Sunday, June 6, field trip to the Tailpipe Area. This trip is optional to the members and will not be an officially sanctioned tour. Tad Dale and Doug Abelin will coordinate the tour with the Butte Field Office.

Agenda Items for June 7 Meeting

Field Office Updates

Whitetail-Pipestone EIS Review and Alternative Discussion

Re-initiate Involvement in Statewide EIS

Handouts (included for members not present)

BLM/FS Memo re: FS involvement in RAC meetings

BLM Memo re: RAC Honor Award

Booklet: Off-Highway Preliminary Proposal

43CFR Ch 11, Part 8340